

THE INFLUENCE OF INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LITERACY ON CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS OF GRADE XII STUDENTS OF SMAS AL-AZHAR MEDAN

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Abstract

This study raises the issue of students of class XII of SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan still having difficulty optimizing literacy to support the development of critical thinking. This study aims to analyze the influence of Indonesian language literacy on the critical thinking skills of class XII students of SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan. Using quantitative and survey methods, data from 133 students were collected through language and critical thinking tests. The results showed a significant positive relationship: students who were more fluent in Indonesian had better critical thinking skills. The study concluded that Indonesian language skills had a positive effect on the critical thinking skills of class XII students of SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan. Meanwhile, suggestions from SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan were encouraged to improve the Indonesian Language curriculum with innovative ways to improve students' critical thinking skills.

Keywords: *Literacy, Thinking Skills, Critical Thinking*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a very important role in training students' critical thinking skills. In Indonesia, strengthening Indonesian language skills is very relevant, considering the challenges faced by students in developing in-depth critical thinking skills. The declining quality of education in most schools in Indonesia, especially in terms of literacy, is a problem that needs to be addressed immediately. According to data from the Language Development and Development Agency in 2019, poor Indonesian language skills are an obstacle to the development of students' critical thinking skills, which play an important role in preparing for global challenges. For example, in the report of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) In 2018, Indonesia ranked 74/79 countries in literacy skills, indicating the importance of strengthening literacy to foster critical thinking skills in secondary students. Critical thinking, namely the ability to analyze, evaluate, and organize arguments systematically, is a skill that cannot be separated from literacy. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) in Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, critical thinking skills are directly related to the ability to process information obtained through language. Within the framework of national education, Indonesian language literacy is a key factor in strengthening this capacity.

However, at the secondary level, grade XII students of SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan still have difficulty optimizing literacy to support the development of critical thinking. Likewise, research by Rochmawati and Fajri (2020) shows that there are still many students in Indonesia who have difficulty accessing information and processing information critically, so they need more specific reading and writing skills-based learning. This study aims to analyzing the influence of Indonesian language literacy on the critical thinking skills of class XII students of Al-Azhar Medan Superior High School. Given the importance of literacy in improving the quality of education, this study will analyze the relationship between the two factors and provide recommendations for optimizing Indonesian language learning to build a future generation of critical thinkers. This study is also

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expected to contribute to improving education policies in Indonesia, especially through improving the quality of learning in secondary schools. The theoretical framework used in this study includes Bloom's Taxonomy classification of thinking which emphasizes the importance of cognitive skill-based learning, including critical thinking, as well as the theory of physics behavioral learning. The tectonic theme emphasizes the interaction between language learning and the development of students' cognitive abilities. This framework will help explain the role of Indonesian literacy in developing students' important critical thinking skills.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indonesian Literacy Theory

Literacy is the ability to read, write and understand texts and information provided. According to Nunan (2013), literacy is not only the ability to read and write but also includes the skills needed to access, analyze and criticize information about individuals. Therefore, literacy is one of the important factors in a person's intellectual development, especially in the world of education. In Indonesia, literacy is at the heart of various education policies aimed at improving the quality of human resources. Educational achievement in Indonesia faces major challenges, especially in areas with limited access to educational resources. However, with various government policies that support the development of literacy-based curricula, positive changes have been seen, although much remains to be done.

For example, Dewi (2020) showed that since the implementation of the 2013 curriculum, students' literacy skills have increased significantly, although the quality of literacy is still relatively low compared to other countries. According to PISA (2018), which measures literacy rates in various countries, Indonesia has a relatively low literacy score compared to other Asian countries, such as Singapore and Japan. This shows that although there has been improvement, the challenges to achieving literacy goals are still great.

Critical thinking theory

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information objectively. Paul and Elder (2014) define critical thinking as the ability to evaluate arguments, identify bias, and evaluate evidence objectively. In the context of education, critical thinking skills are essential to developing deep thinking skills, especially when facing complex problems that do not have clear solutions. In Bloom's Taxonomy, critical thinking is placed at a higher level, encompassing the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. This approach provides an important illustration of the importance of critical thinking in education, as it focuses not only on memorization but also on analytical and rational decision-making skills.

In Indonesia, critical thinking teaching is still relatively limited, although it has begun to be implemented in several schools through problem-solving and group discussion-based methods. Hermawan's (2019) research shows that the implementation of problem-based learning strategies in Jakarta schools can improve students' critical thinking skills. However, critical thinking teaching in many schools in Indonesia is still considered suboptimal because it relies on teaching methods that focus on memorization.

Factors Influencing Literacy and Critical Thinking

Several factors that influence the development of students' literacy and critical thinking skills. Internal factors such as students' motivation and cognitive abilities play an important role in developing literacy and critical thinking. On the other hand, external factors such as curriculum, teaching quality and government policies in the field of education also have a significant influence. PISA (2018) reported that factors such as access to technology and quality of education play an important role in developing students' literacy and critical thinking skills. Technology, especially the



Internet, provides students with greater access to information, which can improve their literacy skills. In addition, social environments such as family and community also influence the development of literacy and critical thinking skills. Dewi (2020) stated that parental support that encourages reading and discussion at home can strengthen children's literacy skills. Likewise, a social culture that encourages critical dialogue and discussion can enrich students' critical thinking skills.

Previous Related Research

Many previous studies have provided a diverse picture of the development of literacy and critical thinking in Indonesia. Hermawan (2019) conducted a study in Jakarta and found that students who participated in problem-based learning programs tended to have better critical thinking skills than students who participated in traditional learning. This shows the importance of learning based on interaction and analysis compared to simple memorization. Outside Indonesia, PISA 2018 provides insight into Indonesia's position in the context of literacy and critical thinking. Indonesia still faces major challenges in improving literacy and critical thinking internationally. Although many initiatives have been undertaken to improve this situation, the results obtained are still not encouraging compared to more developed countries.

III. METHODSTUDY

This study uses a quantitative method with a descriptive causal design to analyze the influence of Indonesian language literacy on the critical thinking skills of grade XII students at Al-Azhar Medan's Leading High School. The population of this study consisted of 200 grade XII students. While the number of samples was determined based on the calculation of the Slovin formula with an error tolerance level (e) of 5% so that 133 samples were found. Furthermore, samples were taken using random sampling techniques to ensure representative results (Sugiyono, 2019).

The instruments used for data collection include the Indonesian Language Proficiency Test which measures students' ability to understand and analyze Indonesian language texts, and a reflective thinking ability test. Arguments in the form of multiple-choice questions and essays that test students' analytical and decision-making abilities. The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis techniques to determine the effect of Indonesian language literacy on critical thinking skills (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The validity and reliability of the instrument were tested using content validity and the reliability test using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient showed very good results (Bhandari, 2020).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the main focus is to determine the effect of Indonesian language literacy on critical thinking skills of grade XII students of SMA Unggulan Al-Azhar Medan. Based on the data that has been collected through questionnaires and regression tests, the following are the results found.

Distribution of Indonesian Language Literacy Scores and Critical Thinking Skills

From the results of data collection, students' Indonesian language literacy scores ranged from 60 to 85, with an average score of 72.5 and a standard deviation of 7.6. This shows that most students have a good level of literacy. Likewise with students' critical thinking skills, which have a score range between 55 and 80, with an average of 68 and a standard deviation of 6.4. This shows that although the majority of students have fairly good critical thinking skills, there are significant differences in terms of their level of critical thinking skills.

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Table 1.Distribution of Indonesian Language Literacy Scores and Critical Thinking Skills

Variables	Average	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Indonesian Language Literacy	72.5	7.6	60	85
Critical Thinking Skills	68	6.4	55	80

The Influence of Indonesian Language Literacy on Critical Thinking Skills

To measure the effect of Indonesian language literacy on critical thinking skills, a linear regression test was conducted. Based on the results of the regression test, it was found that Indonesian language literacy has a significant positive effect on students' critical thinking skills. The regression coefficient obtained was 0.6, which indicates that every one unit increase in Indonesian language literacy score will increase the critical thinking skills score by 0.6. In addition, a p-value smaller than 0.05 (i.e. 0.000) indicates that the effect of Indonesian language literacy on students' critical thinking skills is very significant.

Table 2.Linear Regression Test Results: The Influence of Indonesian Language Literacy on Critical Thinking Skills

Variables	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistics	p-Value
Indonesian Language Literacy (X)	0.6	0.09	6.7	< 0.05

The Relationship Between Indonesian Language Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills Based on Category

To provide a clearer picture of the relationship between Indonesian language literacy and critical thinking skills, further analysis was conducted based on the category of critical thinking skills. The results showed that students with high critical thinking skills (score 80-85) tended to have higher Indonesian language literacy scores, with an average literacy score of 82. Conversely, students with low critical thinking skills (score 55-69) had lower literacy scores, with an average of 65. The distribution of students based on the category of critical thinking skills and literacy scores can be seen in the following table:

Table 3.Distribution of Indonesian Language Literacy Values Based on Critical Thinking Skills Category

Critical Thinking Category	Indonesian Language Literacy Score	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Tall	80-85	45	33.8%
Currently	70-79	60	45.1%
Low	55-69	28	21.1%

From the table above, it can be seen that most students are in the medium category with literacy scores between 70-79, as many as 45.1% of students. This shows that Indonesian language literacy has a significant influence on students' critical thinking skills, especially in the medium and high categories.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between Indonesian language literacy and students' critical thinking skills. This is in accordance with the theory that states that good literacy can improve critical thinking skills, because literacy does not only include reading skills, but also the ability to understand, analyze, and criticize the information received. Improving



Indonesian language literacy, through proper teaching and more structured methods, can strengthen students' critical thinking skills. This is very important in the context of education at Al-Azhar Medan's Leading High School, where students are expected to have not only good literacy skills, but also high critical thinking skills in facing various academic and daily life challenges. This study provides an important picture that Indonesian language literacy not only functions to understand texts, but also as a foundation that supports the development of critical thinking skills, which are one of the important skills in the 21st century.

V. CLOSING

This study concludes that Indonesian language skills have a positive effect on the critical thinking skills of class XII students of Al-Azhar Medan Superior High School. Students with high literacy also tend to have better critical thinking skills. Therefore, learning Indonesian is very important, especially to strengthen reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Based on these conclusions, the researcher suggests that Al-Azhar Medan's Leading Senior High School be encouraged to improve the Indonesian Language curriculum with innovative ways to improve students' critical thinking skills.

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